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USDA Aids Project SAFECOM

For many years, the public safety community has been reshaping the interoperable communications landscape to improve response coordination, critical for saving lives and property. Recently, new public safety challenges and homeland security objectives have further emphasized this need. The Wireless Public SAFETY Interoperable COMMUNICATIONS Program, known as Project SAFECOM, was created to integrate public safety wireless communications throughout all levels of the Government. This effort serves as the umbrella program within the Federal Government to help local, tribal, state and Federal public safety Agencies improve public safety response through more effective and efficient interoperable wireless communications. Project SAFECOM is one of the 20 Presidential eGovernment Initiatives in which USDA actively participates.

As concerns continue to grow about acts of domestic terrorism, civil disturbance, and natural disasters, there have been increased calls for local, state, and Federal public safety providers to better coordinate their efforts at the scene of an incident. This real-time coordination is most often achieved via radio communications using land mobile radio (LMR) technology. When a firefighter is trapped in a burning building, a police officer requires backup, or Federal agents participate in emergency rescue operations, radio communications ensure that help is immediately available. Despite public safety efforts to mitigate the consequences of these incidents, the risk of losing lives and property has grown as a direct result of the substantial time spent establishing on-scene communications. Therefore, as Tim Quinn, Forest Service (FS), the USDA Lead for Project SAFECOM, states, "The greatest benefits will be realized at state and local levels. Collaborative communication is the lifeblood for command and control during public safety response events. This is an opportunity for Federal Agencies to come together and work on furthering advancements for interoperable communications."

A recent example of this interagency coordination effort occurred during the Columbia Shuttle recovery. Because the lines of jurisdiction were blurred, many Federal public safety entities needed to communicate directly with one another as well as with their state and local counterparts. Among all the Agencies involved, FS led implementation of the Incident Command Systems (ICS). FS also provided the leadership and guidance for all air and ground search objectives for NASA. Additionally, FS personnel staffed the Shuttle Material Reporting Hotline, which received a total of over 10,000 calls and was heavily involved in the Command, Planning, Logistics, Operations, Finance, and Information sections. Since February 1, 2003, more than 17,177 personnel from all levels of the Government have been mobilized to this incident through the Texas Interagency Coordination Center.

Project SAFECOM intends to facilitate efforts of this magnitude. The greatest impact of Project SAFECOM will be felt by public safety organizations, particularly incident first responders, throughout the nation that will have the wireless communications tools they need to meet homeland security and traditional public safety challenges. Across all levels of the Government, USDA and the other participating Agencies will support Project SAFECOM to deliver results on what matters most—safeguarding the homeland and protecting citizens.

For more information on Project SAFECOM, please contact the eGovernment Team.

USDA Collaborates with Grants.gov

Grants.gov is another of 20 Presidential Initiatives in which USDA is participating. The goal of Grants.gov is to provide a single site for institutions to find and apply for all Federal grants based on their interests and needs irrespective of agency or programmatic organizational structure. This effort is moving forward under the auspices of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which is the Grants.gov Managing Partner.

USDA continues to work actively to move this initiative forward. Currently, USDA grant making Agencies are developing and implementing a Grants.gov Interface Module (GIM) to handle grant applications sent from the Grants.gov storefront. GIM will be the single point of contact for USDA with Grants.gov, and will ensure that USDA Agencies and grants program offices receive the appropriate applications. USDA's GIM solution will serve as an interim solution to enable the Department to receive grant applications in October. It is expected that the GIM system will be revisited during the future implementation of a USDA eGrants and Grant Management solution, chaired by Robert MacDonald, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES).

To develop a USDA-wide receiving and routing solution in time for the projected October 31st release, the GIM team, composed of agency business and technical representatives to serve as the key stakeholder group, determined the initial agency roles for the system's creation. This effort will leverage the technical resources of the involved Agencies including significant investments already made in Agency-specific grant systems by CSREES and Rural Development (RD).

The participating Agencies designated William Kinney, RD, as the chairman of the stakeholders group and the project manager to coordinate the development efforts among USDA Agencies and lead a

development team of business and technology personnel representing participating Agencies. This team will develop a solution that meets the requirements of USDA grant making Agencies. Currently, William Kinney is working closely with the USDA eGovernment Program Management Office (PMO) to ensure that the GIM effort is coordinated with the Department's eGovernment goals and activities.

For more information on Grants.gov, please contact the eGovernment Team.

OMB Issues eGovernment Implementation Guidance

On August 1, OMB released implementation guidance for the E-Government Act of 2002. The guidance summarizes the requirements and standards Federal Agencies must comply with as they shift their information technology (IT) policies and programs to be more citizen oriented and user friendly.

According to OMB, the new Act requires Agencies to define and deliver performance increases that matter the most to citizens, communicate policies within and across Agencies, and ensure accessibility. Federal Chief Information Officers (CIOs) will have primary responsibility for implementing the Act and the new guidance. CIO duties include participating in the functions of the CIO Council, monitoring implementation, assessing privacy impacts, and conducting IT training programs. The guidance reiterates that, as part of the human capital proposal under the President's Management Agenda, any IT training programs mentioned above must be established and operated using the Federal Government's online training center, Go-Learn.gov.

OMB's Office of Electronic Government and Information Technology will provide overall leadership and direction on eGovernment to executive branch Agencies. In the coming weeks, OMB plans to issue a timeline for agency compliance with the provisions of the E-Government Act. Beginning FY 2004, each Federal agency must provide OMB with a status report on December 15th that details the performance improvements of its business processes in accordance with the requirements of the Act. Starting in FY 2005, OMB will require Agencies to include updates on their Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA) compliance efforts in this new annual report. OMB plans to annually report their findings to Congress by March 1st starting FY 2004.

For more specific details on the implementation guidance, please visit <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/memoranda/m03-18.pdf>

FEA-PMO Sets eGovernment Architectural Standards

The Federal Enterprise Architecture Program Management Office (FEA-PMO), as part of OMB's continuing stewardship responsibilities for the eGovernment Presidential Initiatives, recently released new versions of their reference models to parallel their business-driven approach. Last year, FEA-PMO first issued guidance to provide a consistent, industry-aligned approach for defining and communicating the components needed to plan eGovernment programs. The FEA-PMO conceptual architecture is a collection of interrelated "reference models" designed to facilitate cross-agency analysis and the identification of duplicative investments, gaps, and opportunities for collaboration within and across Federal Agencies.

As a function driven framework, the FEA describes the business operations of the Federal Government independent of the Agencies that perform them. As a result, the reference models are used as standards to establish a baseline of effective eGovernment architectural concepts and a common vocabulary. A brief description is provided below:

- **Performance Reference Models (PRM):** establishes a common set of general performance outputs and measures that Agencies use to achieve much broader program and business goals and objectives.
- **Business Reference Models (BRM):** provides an organized, hierarchical construct for describing the day-to-day business operations of the Federal Government.
- **Service Component Reference Models (SRM):** supports the discovery of Government-wide business and application Service Components in IT investments and assets.
- **Data and Information Reference Models (DRM):** describes, at an aggregate level, the data and information that support program and business line operations.
- **Technical Reference Models (TRM):** provides a foundation to describe the standards, specifications, and technologies to support the construction, delivery, and exchange of business and application components.

On June 12, 2003, OMB deployed the next phase of the FEA – an update to the BRM (Version 2.0), and the initial versions of the SRM and TRM. As OMB works closely with Federal Agencies to develop the FEA, the next several months will bring the release of the PRM, and DRM. In response to the FEA, USDA has established an Enterprise Architecture (EA) program that is leading the Department forward in this area. This effort will allow USDA to align its capital investments appropriately and to use a common standardized vocabulary as it moves forward to create the eGovernment of the future.

For more information on the Federal Enterprise Architecture, please visit: <http://www.feapmo.gov>

For more information on any of these topics, or for general comments or questions, contact the eGovernment Team at:

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